

REMARKS

This Amendment is filed in response to the Office Action mailed December 15, 2003. The Office Action acknowledged the election of Group I (claims 1 - 8 and 19 - 27); rejected claims 1 - 8 and 19; indicated that claims 20 - 25 contained allowable subject matter; and allowed claims 26 and 27. By this Amendment, Applicants have canceled the non-elected claims; and amended claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 19, 21, and 22 to more clearly define the invention. Applicants have also canceled claims 2 and 20, due to the amendments to claims 1 and 19, respectively. Claims 1, 3 - 8, 19, and 21 - 27 are pending. For at least the following reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the application, as amended, is in condition for allowance.

A. Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner indicated that claims 20 - 25 contained allowable subject matter. The Examiner also indicated that claims 26 and 27 were allowed.

Applicants have canceled claim 20 and rewritten independent claim 19 to include the limits of claim 20. It is respectfully submitted that claim 19 is allowable. Claims 21 and 22 were amended to change the dependency from canceled claim 20 to amended claim 19. It is respectfully submitted that each of claims 19 and 21 - 25 is allowable.

B. Claims 1 - 8 and 19

Claims 1 - 8 and 19 were rejected under § 103 as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,467,023 to Takeyama in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,459,564 to Chivers. Applicants disagree with this rejection. Nevertheless, in order to expedite prosecution of the application, Applicants have amended claim 1 to more clearly define the invention. (As mentioned above, claim 19 was amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 20.)

Among other things, claim 1 was amended to include the limitations of claim 2. In addition, claim 1 was amended to clarify the geometry of the void in the fixture. In particular,

claim 1 was amended to recite that the fixture defines a slot. The slot was defined as having first and second sides and an end edge between the first and second sides. One of the steps in the method requires orienting the optical connector with the cage member to position the extending flange of the cage member within the slot between the first and second sides of the fixture. It is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is novel and unobvious over the prior art of record.

Takeyama '023 does not disclose or suggest the invention of claim 1. For example, the purpose of Takeyama is to inspect whether a retainer has been properly positioned on a connector, in addition to inspecting the terminal metal fittings in the housing. Takeyama '023 shows a fixture at 40 for holding the connector. A lever 80 pushes the inspecting portion in a slidable fashion toward and away from the fixture to carry out the inspection. Takeyama '023 does not disclose or suggest, for example, securing the optical connector to a cage member, the cage member including an extending flange, and then mounting the connector with the cage member onto the inspection machine by orienting the connector with the cage member to position the extending flange within a slot that is defined between first and second sides of the fixture and inserting the end surface of the optical connector into the connector receipt aperture.

The Office Action cited Chivers '564 for the concept of disclosing an optical connector having a housing holding an optical ferrule. Applicants respectfully submit that to substitute this type of connector into the inspecting machine disclosed in Takeyama '023 does not make sense. A person of ordinary skill would not have inspected a connector having a housing for holding an optical ferrule with an optical fiber by using the apparatus and method of Takeyama '023. The apparatus and method in Takeyama '023 is for a very specific type of connector - - it is to test the proper mounting of a retainer on a connector and for determining the proper functioning of terminal metal fittings. Claim 1 was amended to clarify that the connector holding a housing holding an optical ferrule with an optical fiber is intended to be part of the method claim.

Claims 3 - 8 depend upon and further limit claim 1. It is respectfully submitted that each of these claims is also allowable. For example, claim 4 recites details about the cage member. The cage member includes a frame and a latch arrangement extending from the frame. The extending flange is required to be cantilevered from the frame and oriented generally normal to

the longitudinal axis of the receiving chamber. These details are not disclosed or suggested in Takeyama '023 or the other art of record.

Dependent claim 5 relates to further details about securing the connector to the cage member. Dependent claim 6 recites still further details about securing the connector to the cage member. Dependent claim 7 relates to the step of unmounting the connector from the inspection machine, including the step of removing the cage member from the connector by releasing the latch arrangement from the connector. These details are not disclosed or suggested by Takeyama, Chivers, or the other art of record.

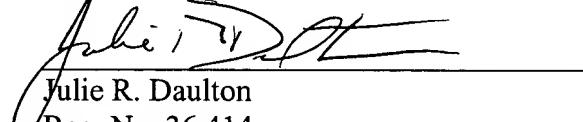
For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 3 - 8 are allowable.

C. Summary

In summary, claims 1, 3 - 8, 19, and 21 - 27 are pending. The Examiner already allowed claims 26 and 27. Claim 19 was written to include the allowable subject matter of claim 20. Applicants amended claim 1 to clarify the invention. Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Applicants request a Notice of Allowance.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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Date: 15 March 2004